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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [PARM](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: KUWAIT SCENESETTER FOR JANUARY 24 JOINT MILITARY
COMMISSION

REF: A. KUWAIT 1153
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 1130
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 1119

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and
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Summary

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Convening in Washington January 24-26, the ninth round of the Joint Military Commission (JMC) -- the first JMC since Spring 2007 -- offers senior DOD and DOS officials an opportunity to pulse GoK senior military officials on possible changes in the military operating environment in Kuwait, including the degree to which the GoK will continue to provide assistance in kind and other support for our activities here as our role in Iraq winds down. The Kuwaiti delegation is expected to seek clarifications of 1991 Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) terms as they relate to anticipated changes in the U.S. military-related footprint in Kuwait as our support for OIF shifts to OEF and the GoK may broach the issue of base consolidation. The GoK will also press for prompt USG action to implement a promised mitigation strategy to resolve residual DU issues involving a limited amount of contaminated soil currently located at the Al-Udairi firing range. End summary.

Backdrop: U.S. - Kuwait Security Relations

[1](#)2. (C) Kuwait's backing of OIF and tangentially OEF has come in the form of both financial support and a very permissive operating environment. Kuwaiti support for the U.S. military presence has included, in material terms alone, over USD 1.2 billion annually in such benefits as free access to bases, waived port and air support fees, customs waivers, subsidized fuel and other services. Kuwait also provides the U.S. military with essentially open access to ten bases, including two air bases (Ali Al Salem Air Base and Al Mubarak Air Base at Kuwait City International Airport, five land bases (Camps Arifjan, Buehring, and Virginia, plus access to a Life Support Area (LSA) facility located on Ali Al Salem Air Base -- which serves as the primary ARCENT hub for moving U.S. forces to CENTCOM forward-deployed bases -- and the joint U.S./Kuwait Khabari border crossing facility, which streamlines convoy operations into and out of Iraq), two port facilities (Kuwait Naval Base and Shuaybah Port), and a Defense Distribution Depot, a 100 acre warehouse complex which facilitates, on average, 1.4 million shipments per year of military equipment. Camp Buehring, notably, serves as a venue for U.S. Army/Marines "spin-up" training prior to deployment to Iraq (and, on occasion, Afghanistan) and serves, as well, as a location where joint exercise training

is conducted involving U.S. and Kuwaiti forces. Kuwait also provides U.S. forces with access to its 2,250 sq/km Udairi Range facility, considered one of the world's best venues for land/air live-fire and combined arms combat training. Approximately 90,000 U.S. military personnel per year utilize this facility for live-fire training purposes.

13. (C) At present, over 20,000 U.S. military personnel (including some 5,000 contractors) are located at bases and facilities in Kuwait, with the bulk at Camp Arifjan. GoK support for the presence of these personnel has been essential to our ability to conduct OIF and has enhanced our ability to conduct operations in the Afghanistan/Pakistan theater. In CY 2008 alone, some 1,750,000 U.S. forces transited through Kuwait, either en route to Iraq or other deployment locations or back to the U.S., utilizing Kuwaiti bases and benefiting from Kuwaiti provided fuel and services.

The Embassy-based Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait (OMCK) facilitates training of Kuwaiti military counterparts and conducts an extensive Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. At present, the U.S. has over 125 active FMS cases with Kuwait amounting to over USD 8.1 billion in value. U.S. military operational flexibility in Kuwait has been largely governed by the favorable terms of a DCA with the GoK signed in 1991 and extended for ten years in 2001; the GoK has indicated it may want to re-negotiate or clarify aspects of the present agreement when it concludes in 2011.

Tabling the DCA

14. (S/NF) Though the Kuwaitis have made no official overtures indicating a desire to renegotiate the DCA at the

JMC, we anticipate that the Kuwaiti delegation will seek to clarify certain applications of the agreement in light of an impending shift of US military support requirements from OIF to OEF. In particular, though the GoK has indicated no objection to the indefinite continuation of USG operations at Camp Arifjan, recently retired Kuwaiti Procurement Chief Brigadier General Jassem Al-Kallaf conveyed to OMCK officials that Kuwait is leaning towards the consolidation of US military forces into fewer bases than the ten currently operational. In previous bilateral meetings with senior military officials, the Kuwaitis have previously requested the return of LSA, Camp Virginia, and parts of Kuwait Naval Base. We anticipate that KMOD officials will likely press for a long term basing plan for US forces in Kuwait as a JMC deliverable. KMOD officials may also share their perception that "since operations in Iraq are finished," US ships moored in Kuwaiti commercial and military harbors should make way for commercial ships, i.e. "cash customers." In the past two months, Kuwait Port Authority has aggressively pursued options for DOD to pay port fees -- primarily related to commercial vessels carrying U.S. military cargo, where entitlement to waiver of fees per the DCA is less clear to the GOK.

DU an Issue of Concern

15. (S/NF) Newly appointed Kuwaiti Armed Forces Chief of Staff (COS) LTG Shaykh Ahmad Al-Khalid Al Sabah has made resolution of the long-running issue of the removal of depleted uranium (DU) contaminated soil residue a top priority (ref A). In several conversations with OMCK, most recently on December 9, he indicated his desire to see the USG quickly resolve the DU residue issue at the Kuwaiti Udairi Range Complex -- noting that this issue has lingered since 2003 and that the USG had made prior commitments in this regard which the GoK now seeks to see fulfilled. Shaykh Ahmad has conveyed that if the matter is not resolved quickly, he will elevate it to the political leadership here (although we would note he has not yet done so), and has intimated that inaction could have lasting consequences for the bilateral mil-mil relationship. The Kuwaiti delegation will likely raise the COS's concerns at the JMC. Resolving this long-running bilateral mil-mil irritant will serve the

broader US interest by reinforcing a positive relationship with the new Kuwaiti Armed Forces leadership, and will also facilitate continuing host government cooperation in sustaining Kuwait's role as a vital logistical and operational hub for the US military. The Embassy reiterates its request that the ARCENT containerization proposal be expedited.

Plenary Overview

¶16. (S/NF) In the January 25 plenary, OMCK officials will brief the Kuwaiti delegation on the following: U.S. perception of regional security threats; withdrawal plans from Iraq and US military presence in Kuwait post the 2011 withdrawal; overview of US strategy in Af/Pak theater; and Kuwait Integration Planning efforts. The Kuwaitis are unclear with regard to the future US military footprint in Iraq and have previously raised concerns that they may be asked to continue to support a robust logistical tail for the residual U.S. military presence there -- something they believe the GoI should increasingly be expected to house and fund. Similarly, while supportive of a continued U.S. military presence in Kuwait to help protect their own national security interests, Kuwait does not view the AFGPAK theater as representing the sort of existential threat that Iraq posed. Consequently, GoK support for an AFGPAK-focused U.S. military logistical hub here -- particularly one that is visible/public or something they are asked to subsidize via the terms of the DCA, should not be taken for granted. The Kuwait military is deeply concerned about the threat emanating from Iran, although the political leadership (which is determinative on policy issues) adopts a more nuanced approach, with the latter fearing both the potential regional leverage of a nuclear weaponized Iranian hegemon while at the same time worrying that any military action to prevent the emergence of the same would also lead to regional instability, including asymmetric retaliation against U.S. forces here or even potentially against governments viewed as supportive/allied with the U.S. The Kuwaitis will therefore be most interested in the U.S. briefing on Iran -- and will be reassured if they hear that our commitment to diplomacy and tougher sanctions if necessary remains firm, but that we

are prepared to address resolutely all contingencies. We look forward to a Kuwaiti briefing on long-term Kuwaiti National Military Strategy and associated planned major weapons purchases, particularly should the GOK use the JMC to telegraph its interest in French Rafales. In subsequent bilateral discussions, we expect to raise detail military cooperation details related to training, information sharing and weapons sales, and joint construction and support projects.

Participants

¶17. (S/NF) Embassy requested that new Kuwaiti Armed Forces Chief of Staff LTG Shaykh Ahmad Al-Khalid Al Sabah attend, but on December 1, KMOD informed OMCK that KMODJ3 Director of Operations Major General Abdulrahman Al-Othman will lead the Kuwaiti delegation. Also expected are:

- BG Nasser Al-Husainan, Director of Naval Operations
- BG Waleed Al-Ateeqi, Director of Operations, Kuwait Air Force
- BG Abdulrahman Al-Hadhoud, Deputy COS for Intelligence and Military Security
- COL Khaled Al-Sader, Chief, Budgetary Directorate
- COL Musaed Al-Mutair, Director, Military Cooperation
- COL Falah Al-Senni, Director, Joint Plans
- COL Lafi Al-Azemi, Chief, Situations Branch
- COL Ahmad Al-Omairi, Commander, Air Defense Artillery
- LTC Jihad Al-Amran, Undersecretary, Naval Forces Communications
- CPT Faisal Bin-Awadh, Undersecretary for MG Abdulrahman Al-Othman

US Participants from the field are:

LTG William Webster, CG, USARCENT,/CFLCC (although we
understand he may not be able to attend the plenary session)
Tom Williams, Deputy Chief of Mission
Brig Gen Greg Touhill, Chief, OMCK
COL Michael Cosby, Advisor, Kuwait Air Force
CAPT Theodore Olson, Director, Security Cooperation
Directorate
COL Clint Pendergast, Gulf Regional Engineer
LTC Jeffrey Bali, J3 Advisor
LTC Wade Foote, Defense Attache
LTC Robert Spessert, J2 Advisor
LTC Mark Alexander, ASG-Kuwait Host Nation Affairs Officer
GS-14 Mark Skarbek, ASG-Kuwait Engineer
COL Theresa Gallagher, Command SJA for ASG-Kuwait
LTC Jacqueline Meyer, FMS Coordinator for Air and Sea
MAJ Richard Alford, Staff Judge Advocate

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